

**Union Township Environmental Commission
Minutes of the April 8, 2008 Regular Meeting**

The April 8, 2008 Regular Meeting of the Union Township Environmental Commission was called to order at 7:03 PM.

The notice of meeting as published in the Hunterdon County Democrat and the Courier-News satisfied the requirements of the Open Public Meeting Act, and was also posted in the Municipal Building, on the Union Township website and filed with the Municipal Clerk.

I. Roll call:

Present: Bill Harclerode, Stephen Hurford, Michele McBride, Robert Nargi, Sandy Stiger, Kathleen Corcoran

Absent: Bob Beylickjian

Public: Frank Mazza, John Wingler, Larry Belikoff, Lois Voronin, Wilma Hutton, Pat Dzuibek, Chuck Neary

Others: Julie Groth (ANJEC), Dave Peifer (ANJEC)

II. Approval of Minutes:

With the correction of the spelling of the name Pyner, approval of the minutes from the January, 2008 meeting was moved by Mr. Harclerode and seconded by Mrs. Corcoran. The corrected minutes were approved by a 6-0 vote.

III. ANJEC Presentation:

Julie Groth and Dave Peifer of the Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions (ANJEC) were present to provide presentations regarding the role of Environmental Commissions (ECs) in New Jersey, and ideas for potential projects and resources available. All public members and EC members introduced themselves and stated their position and/or interest. Julie Groth provided a presentation that discussed the law enabling ECs, operating procedures, legal powers, ideas for projects and activities, and how to build support in the community. A lot of useful information and research materials are available through ANJEC, much of which can be found on their website. Dave Peifer discussed municipal environmental and public open space "stewardship" and its meaning. He also discussed the current status of funding opportunities, which are limited through the State of New Jersey due to the current state budget crisis. However, he stated that the Highlands Council is one agency that does currently have funding available. There is also money available for green building and green acres; however it requires some creativity and skills in the construction and real estate markets, and in property management. He stressed the importance of maintaining good relationships with property owners and to get across the importance of stewardship on their property and beyond, for the good of the environment and for future generations.

IV. Chairmans Report:

1. Mr. Nargi stated that he had called the NJDOT about broken fencing and garbage along Rt. 173, and it was stated that garbage had been collected recently. There was also a broken manhole near the diner, which has been repaired.
2. Mr. Nargi stated that Pilot had a diesel leak incident, where a diesel pump wouldn't shut off and it went into the storm drain. Pilot did report the incident to the NJDEP. The incident has a case file at NJDEP. Mr. Nargi also reported the incident to the NJWSA. It was discussed that the pumps should all have emergency shutoffs.
3. Mr. Nargi stated that he talked to Princeton Hydro and Brian Kirkpatrick, Planning Board Chairman, so that Christine Altomari of Princeton Hydro will do writeups on site plan reviews, which would be covered under the escrow account. There was some discussion regarding the procedures for the EC receiving and reviewing copies of site plans for approval by the Planning Bd. Mr. Nargi stated that three copies are provided to the Environmental Commission. Ms. McBride suggested that somebody should determine which projects would require review on behalf of the EC by Chris Altomari of Princeton Hydro. Mrs. Corcoran stated that she could do that initial review to determine when there is more of an

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environmental review required. Mr. Nargi stated that there would be no duplication between the work done by Chris Altomari and Dr. Souza of Princeton Hydro, who is the environmental professional for the Planning Board. Ms. Altomari would provide her writeup to Dr. Souza and he would further it, if necessary, under his contract with the Planning Bd. Mrs. Corcoran discussed the timing issues associated with the reviews of the documents. All agreed that the environmental commission should get the drawings, meet and at least get meeting minutes out before the planning board meets. Mr. Nargi mentioned that he had previously suggested that all potential developers come before the EC before moving forward to property purchase and site development. There was discussion regarding walk-throughs of potentially developed properties, which can be scheduled by the Planning Bd. and the EC. Mrs. Corcoran stated that she has not been involved in any walk-throughs to date. Mr. Nargi stated that there is typically plenty of time to do environmental reviews and walk-throughs for major projects.

4. Mr. Nargi stated that it is anticipated that two new EC members would be approved by Mayor Mazza during the next Twp. Committee meeting.
5. Mr. Nargi stated he talked to John Glen of the County regarding the cutting down of the Franklin Twp. trees on Rt. 513 in front of Milligan Farm. He said that the trees are orange and the fruit has been falling down and breaking windows on cars. The County stated that they would grind the stumps down, and they intend to replace the trees onto the other side of Rt. 513, which would be in Union Township, when the town develops the COAH housing on Milligan Farm and they know how the street will be widened, etc.

V. Committee Reports:

Open Space Committee:

1. Mrs. Stiger reported that she needs to get the information back from everybody she gave it to. Mr. Nargi stated that the new members may be able to help with conservation easements. Ms. McBride stated that the LUCARS system upgrade was on the agenda of the last Twp. Committee. Status is unknown.

Property Management:

1. Mr. Beylickjian is not present, and is extremely busy lately. Mr. Nargi stated that he had talked to Mr. Beylickjian about the property management and he agreed that Ms. McBride should be appointed to be the subcommittee chair for property management. Mr. Nargi stated that he would like to appoint Ms. McBride as subcommittee chair. This was moved by Bill Harclerode and seconded by Mr. Hurford. All approved.

Equestrian Trails:

1. Mr. Nargi stated that he had spoken with the County about Joanne Sotras and Katie Matthews being interested in putting trail maps together, and putting signs on Rt. 513. The County agreed but would require a sketch of where the signs would be located. Mr. Nargi stated that we need a group to start putting these maps together. Mrs. Stiger asked what should be done to create the maps. Mr. Nargi stated that we have a rough map of some properties, including Douglas Farm, but the next step would require the County GPS to be involved. The County has meetings and we should probably attend some meetings. Ms. Stiger stated that she would be willing to help. Mr. Hurford stated that this is an ongoing issue, because the private property owners don't want the trails on their property put onto maps. Mr. Nargi stated that Joanne Sotras and Katie Matthews have agreed to provide the private property trail maps to the Environmental Commission, and this information would not become public. Trails on public property would be public.
2. Mr. Nargi requested a volunteer to work with Joanne Sotras and Katie Matthews, who are ready to work with the EC to get the signs and trails laid out. Mr. Hurford volunteered to take this project over, and he can work with Mr. Beylickjian and Mrs. Stiger.

Planning Board:

1. Ms. Corcoran reported that at the Planning Bd. meeting 3/27/08, the PS Construction residential development preliminary major subdivision approval application was approved with conditions. There was apparently garbage dumped there and local residents attested

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- that there had been drums dumped on the site. The Board required that the applicant do three samples for priority pollutants plus 40 in the two garbage excavation areas. The project will also include 2 COAH units. Ms. Corcoran showed the commission the sketches of the proposed units, which will share a property with a market rate home and have a colonial look.
2. Ms. Corcoran reported about the Apgar property on Driftway, adjacent to Hoffman Park, which had an illegal transformation of an accessory barn into a residence, requiring variances. Mr. Apgar agreed to turn the existing house on the property into a low income COAH unit while maintaining the transformed barn as a single family residence with strict limitations on interior modifications to the barn. Currently the transformed barn is suitable for a single person due to lack of walls and privacy on the inside. The Board agreed to the variance requirements subject to the COAH obligation and other restrictions on modifications to the structures.
 3. At the April 1, 2008 Workshop, several projects were discussed:
 - a. Charlestown Road Barn. The owner would like to get a pole barn on the property. He is extremely limited as to what he can do under current zoning. He was urged to hire an engineer to evaluate what the zoning would allow on the property, get a wetlands letter of interpretation (LOI), and to also look into what the County Health Dept and Highlands Council will allow on the property regarding potential wastewater or greywater discharges.
 - b. Quarry on Rt. 173 east, proposed 350 +/- townhouses. Applicant has provided very basic concept drawings. The applicant was told that the project would need to provide a COAH unit for 1/5 of the units.
 - c. Shell Station/Lehigh Gas on the corner of Frontage Road and Perryville Rd. The applicant is seeking to convert the existing garages into a convenience store and add a carwash around the back. The applicant expressed willingness to convert the façade to a colonial type look and has no interest in becoming a diesel distributor due to the size of the property. The applicant was told to look into how it would discharge its car wash wastewater, as this would not be effectively treated in the septic system.

Road Noise:

1. Mr. Harclerode reported that the subcommittee met and he sent the EC minutes. The North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA) updated its Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) to get the \$10 million from Essex County to approve the repaving Rt. 78 with low noise asphalt. He has sent emails on behalf of the EC to various parties involved with our support of this change, and also thanking Matt Holt for his involvement on our behalf.
2. Regarding the proposed new bill to ban unmuffled engine braking, it was suggested by our local representative that municipal mayors could not sign one letter, but that each town council should pass a resolution supporting the proposal of a new bill.
3. Regarding the Hunterdon County Draft Transportation Plan, Mr. Harclerode commented to them recommending that the plan should also include a proposal for reducing truck traffic. Mr. Nargi stated that there will be a public meeting at 9:00 am on May 1. He will attend as he has been a stakeholder all along. Mr. Harclerode can provide any comments to Mr. Nargi that he can represent at that meeting. There was discussion that another truck got stuck under the railroad underpass in Pattenburg, presumably trying to bypass the weigh station.
4. Regarding engine idling, the Governor sent a letter to all the mayors stating that it's against the law to idle more than 3 minutes. Mr. Harclerode called the NJDEP to find out about idling on private property. He stated that the diesel trucks emit more emissions when they are idling than when they are moving. Mr. Harclerode has investigated methods of heating and air conditioning trucks when trucks are stopped. Currently, the law allows only those trucks with a person in the sleeper berth to idle. Ms. McBride stated that if there is a sleeper berth, then the NJDEP cannot summons them. Ms. McBride had some experience with trying to get the NJDEP to enforce the idling law in local private truck stops; however, the sleeper berth exemption has been a major problem. Ms. McBride stated that in 2010, the law will require that no trucks can idle; other means will have to provide for heating and air conditioning in the trucks.
5. Regarding quiet train crossings, Mr. Harclerode reported that this is likely to take a few more months to even get the application into the database.

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6. Mr. Harclerode reported that Mr. Charlie Calv has joined the Road Noise Subcommittee. He is on the Environmental Commission in Bethlehem Township.

VI. Communication and Education:

1. Ms. McBride sent five thank-you letters to each of our newsletter advertisers, and to Ikaria for their generous support.
2. Mr. Nargi reported that the Sidney Brook stream assessment is essentially done, and the narrative will be put together in a few weeks. There were about 1,000 pictures, and some interesting finds, including catch basins that nobody knew were there and were overgrown, and deep sections of the brook where they may be fish. The next stage is to decide where to put testing equipment and to move to the next phase and look for fish and vertebrate. There were some barrels found on township property. There was one farm property owner that it was determined that they have been driving through wetlands on their property and causing erosion into the stream. Mr. Nargi will go back and talk to them about this.

VII. Hoffman Park:

1. Ms. McBride has been researching issues and provided copies of her research to the Environmental Commission members. Mr. Hurford has agreed to help from a construction perspective. Mr. Harclerode has agreed to help from a financial and property management strategy perspective. Mrs. Stiger has also been helpful with evaluating the Hoffman House. Ms. McBride stressed safety and stabilization issues with the Hoffman House. The immediate concerns are where the basement/tunnel has collapsed; eave/roof leakage issues; and the unprotected swimming pool hazard. Ms. McBride expressed concern that nobody should be visiting this site until these issues are addressed. She has gotten ideas on costs from local contractors for costs to alleviate these issues. John Leonard is scheduled to meet the group at the house and help them to determine permitting and other ancillary costs associated with the proposed construction, utilities that will be impacted, etc. Rob Haynes has informed Ms. McBride regarding the purchasing and public bid requirements to have this work done. This will require that the Twp. Committee approve an action plan presented by Ms. McBride to have contractors to bid on the remedial work that is needed. Mr. Nargi stated that the Environmental Commission can get quotes from contractors before going before the Twp. Committee. There was some discussion regarding funding issues in the Township, and whether we should determine what Twp. funds are available to spend before getting quotes. The approximate rough costs anticipated will be provided to the Twp. Committee for consideration. With no funds available, demolition may also be a consideration.
2. Regarding the Douglas Property, Ms. McBride stated that this is a different situation than Hoffman. It is owned entirely by the Twp. and includes approximately 100 acres, which includes a tenant's farm house, frame barn, a cement blocked dairy barn and a hay field. Currently, there is a rental arrangement with Mr. Matthews to rent the hay field. The tenant house is currently empty. Some possible future arrangements include continuing the rental/lease arrangement for the hay field; subdivision; possible rental use of the tenant's house; and demolition and sale of the barn component. Another possibility is the sale of the property to preserved farmland. A Green Acres assessment would be required before we could determine anything.
4. Ms. McBride states she would like to talk to Franklin Twp. officials about their farmland preservation program. Franklin Twp. has an aggressive open space management program, which includes the purchase of property by the Township, putting it into their farmland preservation program and then auctioning the sites to farmers with limitations on what uses are allowable for the site. The money made from the auctions is then put back into their farmland preservation program. Mr. Nargi mentioned that there are some issues on how the Franklin Twp. farmland is actually preserved. There was some discussion, and it was determined that this should be investigated before Union Twp. implements such a plan.
5. There was some discussion regarding the Township being in the property management business, such as Hoffman Park and Douglas. Ms. Corcoran stated that the current COAH requirements, and the fact that the Township is currently requiring builders to build them vs. cash in lieu of building, the Township will probably have an employee or a consultant that will be taking control of all of these things within the near future.

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6. Mrs. Corcoran made a motion to proceed to Phase I regarding the Hoffman House. This was moved by Mr. Harclerode, seconded by Mrs. Corcoran, and approved by a 6-0 vote.
7. The proposed actions on the Douglas property will not require a vote.

VIII. **Adjournment:**

The Chair asked for a motion to adjourn. It was moved by Mr. Harclerode, seconded by Mrs. Corcoran, and approved by a 6-0 vote.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kathleen Corcoran, Secretary